



MEDIA RELEASE | July 31, 2019

OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE ADDRESS DRUG CRISIS WITH SYILX WELLBEING: NATION DRUG FORUM

tkwəʔniwt (Westbank), Syilx Territory: On July 31, 2019, the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) will host the “Syilx Well-Being: Nation Drug Forum”. This Drug Forum is part of a broader stream of work carried out by the ONA that affirms our continued commitment to bring awareness to the issue of the pervasive drug and opioid crisis that is gripping Syilx Okanagan communities. There is an urgent need to address the stigma that surrounds drug use and overdose, while simultaneously increasing culturally appropriate supports and services to decrease the violence and disruption that our communities face.

This year’s Drug Forum will include captikwl, a ‘Voices from the People’ Panel and participatory action dialogues and Guest Speakers of families directly impacted by loss due to loss of a child due to this crisis. The Forum will engage Syilx Okanagan leadership, frontline workers, community members, ONA staff and partner agencies in our continued effort to build upon Syilx models for both well-being and resiliency in the face of these most challenging social and community issues.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip states “The overdose crisis constitutes a state of emergency. This crisis is fueled by poverty and inequality, and finds its roots in the devastating trauma of colonization that continues to have a profound impact on our people. If we don’t address these core issues, which includes connections to land and meeting basic needs, our people will continue to suffer. As Syilx People we carry an inherent responsibility to each other, our families and our communities, that no one is left behind, and that we are on the healing path, together as a Nation.”

Events such as the Drug Forum are collaborative efforts that include the support and contribution of partners such as First Nations Health Authority and Interior Health.

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The Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) was formed in 1981 as the inaugural First Nations government in the Okanagan, which represents the 8 member communities of the Okanagan Nation. The ONA mandate is to work collectively to advance and assert *Syilx Okanagan* Nation Title and Rights over the *Syilx Okanagan* Nation Territory.

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